THE THIRD DAY.

Wednesday, the 23rd February, 1927.

The Assembly met again at 11-30 A. M. on the 23rd February, 1927.

DEWAN: Gentlemen, I had letters last night from Mr. R. Nilakanta Pillai and Mr. S. Subbaraya Aiyar, in which they ask permission to be allowed to speak on the subject they had yesterday. The reason why I did not allow them to speak yesterday was that I had already made a full pronouncement and had definitely stated in my opening Address that the final verdict would lie with the representatives of the people. In view of that pronouncement, I thought it would be a waste of the time of the House if they speak on the subject and it must necessarily be a matter of supererogation. But if these gentlemen wish to speak, let them by all means speak (*Applause*).

23. Sale of Puduval lands to non-Travancoreans.

MR. R. NILAKANTA PILLAI (*Member, Tiruvalla taluk, Group II*) said that the object of his representation was to draw the attention of the Government to the effects which the proposed Brooke Bond concession would have on the existing agricultural facilities in Central Travancore. That aspect of the question did not appear to have been considered by the Government in spite of public agitation in the press and on the platform. The scheme involved the permanent alienation of a large tract of land equal to the size of a taluk in the rich forest regions forming the catchment area of the Pamba river. The exploitation of that area and the consequent denudation of the forests there would render the river useless for agricultural purposes, as a result of which the arable lands in the neighbourhood would be converted into sandy deserts. It was therefore absolutely necessary in the first instance to investigate, through a committee of experts, how far the exploitation of the area in question would affect agriculture in Central Travancore and to publish the results of the investigation. Till then, the sending of the survey party, which involved heavy expenditure, could be delayed.

Again, the question whether it would be advisable in the interests of the country to assign large tracts of land from the catchment area of important rivers and the question whether such assignment, even if found unobjectionable, should be made in the name of foreign corporations should also be considered. The tying up of lands in perpetuity involved in the ownership of lands by a company, which enjoyed a perpetual existence in law, was neither safe nor advantageous to any country, much less to Travancore where an educated and intelligent set of people, steadily advancing in economic organisation and enterprise, were on the look-out for land for extension of cultivation. It would therefore be a suicidal policy if the Government made a permanent alienation of one-twentieth part of the State in favour of a foreign company. The questions relating to the treatment of natives by foreigners and the possible grip which such landed proprietors might have on the politics of the country would convert a peaceful land into a bear-garden. The advantages resulting from the scheme, as pictured by the Government, were more or less imaginary and had to be examined more carefully. In the circumstances, the member prayed that a committee of experts and non-officials elected by the Assembly be appointed to consider the question from an economic and political point of view before taking further steps for surveying or sorting out the land.

24. The various aspects of the contemplated assignment of an extensive tract of Puduval land to a European Company.

MR. S. SUBBARAYA AIYAR (*Member, Municipal Council, Haripad*) said that it was gratifying to note that all the facts connected with the proposal for the assignment of a large extent of land to a company had been frankly stated by the

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Government for the information of the public. But there were some aspects of the question which were not sufficiently brought home and which deserved detailed examination.

According to the last Census, the average population per square mile of habitable area in Travancore was 840, while the average for the whole State was 525. In some taluks it was more than 1,000. The hilly regions were thinly populated while the lowlands were thickly populated. The ever-increasing population had to be provided with fresh lands in the State, especially when emigration outside India had become difficult as the events in Kenya, South Africa and other places had shown. It was therefore necessary to keep the entire available area on the hills intact for Travancoreans. The whole of Devicolam had already become the property of the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company, Ltd., and the Anglo American Direct Tea Trading Company, Ltd., and the whole of the Cardamom Hills Reserve had been practically closed for Travancoreans. The cardamom planters already there were non-Travancoreans.

Although the exact area to be assigned was not ascertainable, it was clear from what had already been made public that the area was extensive. Such extensive areas should not be assigned for the mere asking or even for making temporary profits. Further, no necessity had arisen for the assignment of such large areas. For the past few years, Travancore was having surplus budgets and there was no cause for anxiety about scarcity of money. If it was the idea of the Government to make money by means of the proposed registry for the construction of railways the people would rather be without railways than have them at such cost.

The scheme, was not advantageous to the native planter. Out of every 1,000 acres, 600 acres were to be assigned to the company and the remaining 400 acres to the small local estate-owners in blocks of 25 acres each. A tea-planter could not work his estate with success, unless its area be at least 200 acres. Otherwise, it would result in failure. Even the smallest estate-owner must keep his establishment of coolies, provide them with housing arrangements, engage contractors for the supply of rice and other necessaries and supply other requisites incidental to plantations. If unable to do so, he would be obliged to plant tea, pluck the leaves and hand them over to the company and accept whatever price was offered by the latter. The working of the smaller holding would not only fail, but would also result in endless dependence and ruin.

The native planter did not stand in need of tutelage and instruction in planting affairs. Excluding the lands given to the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company, there were already 12 Travancorean-owned tea estates having a total area of 5,150·44 acres to 33 European-owned estates having a total area of 31,899·59 acres. As regards rubber, Travancorean-managed estates were 90 against 67 managed by Europeans, their total extents being 16,211·39 acres and 54,048·99 acres, respectively. The above figures would show that, given the necessary facilities, the Travancorean will not lag behind the European in planting enterprises. But Travancoreans were not sufficiently encouraged by the State. The *taravila* on tea lands had gone up to Bh. Rs. 60 an acre. There was, besides, *tadivila* payable at Bh. Rs. 35 per acre of the wooded area. The rates were high and injuriously affected the local planter, while they enabled the rival European planter to acquire lands. The member considered it was high time that a Royal Proclamation was issued precluding foreigners from acquiring large estates within Travancore. By 'foreigners' he meant people from the British Dominions, whether English, Scotch, Irish, South African or others. Elsewhere, in South Africa, Australia and Canada, British Indians were denied equal status with local inhabitants. The few Indians in South Africa were also being repatriated and were prevented from acquiring lands. The intention was that all available lands should be preserved for local people and their future generations. In Travancore also, the lands should be preserved for Travancoreans and they should be encouraged and given all facilities for cultivation. The people and the State would thereby be rendered richer. The earnings of the foreign companies went to their native homes leaving the State poorer to that extent.

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The assignment of large areas of forests would affect the rainfall of the country. Statistics would show that rainfall decreased more and more as the area of the hills and forests diminished. Mountains and forests played a prominent part in the rainfall of Travancore. While the Western Ghats prevented the free passage of water vapour, the deep roots of the huge forest trees absorbed the rain water and prevented its being wasted in rapid torrents along the slopes, thereby ensuring a perennial source of water supply. The effect of the denudation of forests would be that the rain water would also wash down the loosened surface soil along rivers thereby silting them up.

Again, the clearing and planting of the hills would involve an exodus of labour from the lowlands. Such emigration would result in scarcity of labour in the lowlands where life depended mainly on economic cultivation. During the past 20 years, wages had risen high and working hours become shorter. The rate of wages on the hills must necessarily be high and labour would inevitably be drawn away from the lowlands, thereby bringing ruin on the poor cultivator.

Some of the above aspects had not been adequately considered by the Government. Although the Economic Development Board was consulted, the people at large believed that the considered opinion of the best and the ablest was not taken. On a former occasion, as a result of the clamour of the people, the Kallar Scheme was dropped. The member prayed that, in the same way, the proposed measure under reference be also dropped. If, however, the Government were not convinced from the representations and the opinions expressed through the press and platform, he requested that a committee of experts composed of native planters, and the agriculturists, with a non-official majority, be appointed to go into the question and submit a report within a specified time.

DEWAN'S REPLY : I may inform you, gentlemen, who spoke last, that all your representations will, in due course, be brought on record in the proceedings of this Assembly this year.

25. The Travancore Jenmi and Kudiyan Regulation.

MR. PARAMESVARAN TUPPAN NAMPUTIRI (*Member, Jenmies, Kottayam Division*) said that the major portion of the lands in the State were originally classified either as *Devaswom* or *Brahmaswom* lands. Of these, *Devaswom* lands were of comparatively later origin. They were lands originally given away free by the Malayala Brahmin *jenmies*, who were the *Ooranmakars* of many *Devaswoms*, for the maintenance of those *Devaswoms*. But the origin of the lands was forgotten and Malayala Brahmins were regarded as the *jenmies* and the actual occupants of the lands as the *kudiyans*. If a census of the *jenmies* and *kudiyans* be taken, there would not be found more than one *jenmi* for every 1,000 *kudiyans*. Even in the Legislative Council, the majority of the members were *kudiyans*. In the circumstances, it would not be just if, according to the rules of the Council, the Jenmi and Kudiyan Regulation be amended on the strength of the majority of votes of the Council. The proposal to amend the Regulation should therefore be dropped.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Tuppan Namputiripad, your representation is noted.

26. The Travan[illegible] Namputiri Bill.

MR. PARAMESVARAN TUP[illegible] NAMPUTIRI (*Member, Jenmies, Kottayam Division*) said that it was *not* 'exp[illegible]ent' to define and amend the law of succession and family management of the Namputiris as stated in the preamble of the Namputiri Bill. The existing law did not require such definition and amendment and the author of the Bill had not stated why or how the necessity for the Bill had arisen. It was wrong to believe that the Namputiris of Travancore wanted such a Bill and its author could not say that he was voicing forth their opinion.

The existing law of succession and family management had the sanction of the *Vedas* and the *Smritis*, although historians held a different view. The rules enjoined by that law were mandates from the sacred *rishis* of yore and the Namputiris not merely believed in them but considered it their duty to act up to them. Those rules did not stand separate but were inter-related with the religious

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